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PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 30th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 8 October 1992, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. GANEV (Bulgaria)
(President)

- General debate [9] (concluded)

  Address by Major-General Sitiveni L. Rabuka, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji

  Statement by Mr. Kaputin (Papua New Guinea)

  Address by Mr. Maxime Carlot Korman, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu

- Statement by the President

- Programme of work

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 9 (concluded)

GENERAL DEBATE

ADDRESS BY MAJOR-GENERAL SITIVENI L. RABUKA, PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI

The PRESIDENT: The Assembly will first hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji.

Major-General Sitiveni L. Rabuka, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji, was escorted to the rostrum.

The PRESIDENT: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji, His Excellency the Honourable Major-General Sitiveni L. Rabuka, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. RABUKA (Fiji): It is my honour and privilege, on behalf of the Government and people of Fiji, to convey to you, Sir, our warmest congratulations upon your election to the high office of President of the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. We are confident that under your distinguished leadership the Assembly at this session will be guided to a most successful conclusion.

My delegation extends its deep appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Samir Shihabi, for his exemplary leadership during the last session of the General Assembly.

Since our last session, a year ago, several new Members have joined the Organization. My delegation welcomes them most warmly. We believe that the near-universality of membership of the United Nations that we now have can lead to greater understanding and ultimately to concrete action in the search for lasting solutions to many of the problems facing our global community.

(Mr. Rabuka, Fiji)

The report of the Secretary-General is broad, and it demonstrates the complexity of the issues that concern the world today. My delegation commends the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report and for the important steps he has taken to carry out the various tasks that our Organization has assigned to him. We hope that at its forty-seventh session the General Assembly will help to find real solutions to these problems.

The last few years have been a period of profound changes. With the end of the cold war, we have witnessed a new wave of nationalism surging in several parts of the world. This reflects an intense yearning for self-determination, especially in the political and economic spheres. At the same time, we have seen the world economy moving towards even greater interdependence and integration. In these developments, we see bright prospects and opportunities, but we also see the emergence of new problems, greater uncertainties and more unresolved inequities.

In the Horn of Africa - in Somalia - a human tragedy of unprecedented dimensions is unfolding. War, drought and the collapse of civil authority threaten the lives of millions. Starvation has already claimed the lives of thousands of Somalis. All international efforts to respond to the overwhelming needs of the people of Somalia must be stepped up.

We fully support the United Nations in its role in Cambodia, and we have contributed 50 police personnel to the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). The task facing UNTAC is certainly not easy. Fiji believes that the Cambodian people must be given the opportunity to determine freely their own political destiny and to enjoy the peace, stability and well-being to which they have aspired for so long.

(Mr. Rabuka, Fiji)

We hope that the reform process in South Africa can build on the progress that has already been made. We urge that the efforts to dismantle apartheid proceed as quickly as possible so that more deaths and bloodshed may be avoided. The international community must continue to assist the people of South Africa in their endeavour to bring an effective end to violence and to create the conditions for dismantling of apartheid in their country.

My country commended both Koreas for taking seats last year as new Members of this Organization. It is encouraging to note that since then the two Koreas have intensified their dialogue and that they are taking important steps to strengthen further the ties between their two countries. The reunification of the Koreas will go a long way towards ensuring peace and stability in North-East Asia.

Fiji welcomes the Middle East peace process that is taking place. We hope that the parties concerned will seize the opportunity to seek a comprehensive and just solution to the Middle East issues, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions. We call upon all the parties involved to make every possible effort and to demonstrate all possible understanding, with a view to bringing about a just and permanent peace in the area. Fiji has already lost several of its soldiers engaged in peace-keeping duties in the cause of peace in the area. We therefore firmly believe that a positive outcome to the process would be a fitting tribute to all those gallant soldiers who died for the noblest cause in our world - the cause of peace.

The gap between the developed countries and the developing countries has widened. The world's population has grown to 5.5 billion, and much of the growth has taken place in the developing countries, which are home for

(Mr. Rabuka, Fiji)

77 per cent of the world's people. Moreover, about 1.4 billion of the world's people live in extreme poverty, and the external debt of developing countries continues to grow.

As Fiji is a developing country, faced with its people's rising expectations of improved conditions of living, we believe that the international community must make every effort to address and find solutions to the economic problems that we face. We urge the United Nations to continue to play a catalytic role in the creation of an international economic environment that will enhance the economies of the developing and underdeveloped countries of the world.

I am aware that a process of review and revitalization of the United Nations is already under way. We in Fiji fully support the process, and I urge all Members of the Organization to do likewise so that programmes to meet the challenges of closer international cooperation may be created.

We welcome the reforms that have already been put in place to strengthen the Economic and Social Council. The Charter envisages the Council's being able to provide Member States and relevant bodies and agencies within the United Nations system with overall direction and guidance on all matters relating to social and economic development. The Council should explore new needs, priorities and opportunities for joint international action and should coordinate them. A sense of priority in such changes will strengthen the impact of resolutions.

(Mr. Rabuka, Fiji)

My Government firmly believes that the private sector has a pivotal role to play in the development of the economy and therefore of the nation. We are taking a number of steps to enhance and facilitate private-sector activity. In this regard, as a relatively small island State, we welcome several private-sector initiatives which the United States of America has announced for our region, including the proposed United States-Pacific island countries joint commercial commission.

Fiji also strongly supports efforts to liberalize world trade, and in particular we look forward to a successful conclusion to the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations. In fact, Fiji is already committed to giving the smaller Pacific island countries in our region duty-free access to our markets for a number of commodities and products.

To ensure the economic development of developing countries, it is vital that our exports be ensured greater access to markets of developed countries. The terms of trade for developing countries' exports, especially for commodities, should also be significantly improved. There can be no doubt that the only credible option for generalized prosperity and development is a truly open and liberalized trading system.

The Government of Fiji is committed to this objective. In the last few years our own trade regime has been liberalized considerably. Import quotas have been replaced with tariffs. The Government remains committed to continuous and steady reductions in the overall level of import protection. In addition, we are continuing to pursue a policy of attracting foreign investments through generous incentives to foreign investors wishing to set up export and manufacturing facilities in our country.

(Mr. Rabuka, Fiji)

My country was pleased to participate in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, in June. I reaffirm our full commitment to the several decisions taken at the Conference, including the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21, the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biodiversity and the Statement on forest principles.

My Government supports the proposed commission on sustainable development, which is to be discussed later in this session. We particularly support the proposal that the commission be the main forum for consultation and leadership on the implementation of Agenda 21 at the global, regional and national levels. The commission should be able to review progress in implementation of Agenda 21, as well as provide a forum for further development and updating in the light of all future developments in the technological, legal, economic, financial and other areas. To be effective, the commission must be supported by a small and well-organized secretariat.

Global warming and a rise in the sea level pose serious threats to the very existence of a number of our neighbouring small island States in the South Pacific, and, I dare say, in other parts of the world. We welcome, therefore, the Framework Convention on Climate Change as an important first step towards addressing these threats. We want to see the Convention put into effect as early as possible. Negotiations of protocols should commence soon, especially on targets and timetables for the reduction of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions.

We also welcome UNCED's call for a series of meetings and conferences on the sustainable development of small island countries. Fiji supports the

(Mr. Rabuka, Fiji)

convening of the first global conference on small island states' sustainable development and its implications, and we will eagerly follow progress on the arrangements for the conference.

Agenda 21 also called for conferences on the conservation and management of fish resources, one of the main sources of livelihood for many of our small island countries. Fiji endorses the Agenda 21 chapter on marine living resources and, in particular, the proposed United Nations intergovernmental conference to address the issue of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory species in the context of the Convention on the Law of the Sea.

UNCED was a major step forward, but the next step may be more difficult. The spirit in which the various agreements were conceived and adopted needs to be matched by their speedy implementation.

We are pleased that a good start has been made with the recently announced "Capacity 21" initiative by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which aims at providing support to developing countries in the preparation and management of their own sustainable development plans. This initiative will go a long way towards translating Agenda 21 into effective national programmes.

Today the world recognizes that basic human and social dimensions of development have long been neglected. UNDP's latest "Human Development Report" reminds us that development means involving people, placing them at the centre of all decision-making. At the United Nations, we, too, must place people at the centre of all our activities.

I ask Member States to support the proposed world summit for social development, to be convened in 1995. The summit should elevate important

(Mr. Rabuka, Fiji)

social issues and allow socio-economic questions to be addressed more comprehensively than has been done in the past.

Furthermore, the International Conference on Population and Development, to be convened in Egypt in September 1994, will provide an added focus on the relationship between population and social development. My country looks forward to participating in both conferences.

We have received the report of the Secretary-General, "An Agenda for Peace" (A/47/277), containing his constructive analysis and recommendations on ways to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations for preventive diplomacy, peace-building and peace-keeping. We applaud the Secretary-General for his pertinent recommendations and for some of the measures that he has already taken.

Peace-keeping has eased tension and conflicts in several areas of the world. Fiji takes pride in being one of the countries contributing troops that are helping to promote and maintain peace in different parts of the world. We support the extension of United Nations peace-keeping into new fields, including the prevention of conflicts and peace-building, as suggested by the Secretary-General in his report to the Assembly. We recognize, however, that peace-keeping operations can be successful only with the full cooperation of the parties and a clearly defined mandate from the Security Council.

(Mr. Rabuka, Fiji)

As a former military officer, I know only too well that peace-keeping costs money and that financial contributions to our Organization are vital to the ultimate goal of secure and lasting peace in our universe. My delegation appreciates the undertaking by previous speakers to ensure adequate financial support for United Nations peace-keeping and humanitarian activities.

It is perhaps appropriate at this point to remind this gathering that when the former Deputy Prime Minister of Fiji, the Honourable Josefata Kamikamica, addressed the Assembly in 1991, he indicated that my country would hold a general election in 1992 under our new Constitution. A peaceful general election, in which all the major political parties participated, was held in May this year. Since then, we have had two sessions of the new Parliament. I felt constrained to mention this because there is a growing demand in the world today for democracy, a necessary aspect of which is the holding of regular elections.

Previous representatives of my country who have addressed the Assembly within the last four years adverted to the changes which had taken place and were still taking place in Fiji on the new Constitution that was promulgated in 1990 on the basis of recommendations by an independent multiracial national commission. I take great pleasure in informing this assembly of the world that my Government has committed itself to a review of the 1990 Constitution of Fiji. Preparatory work has already begun with regard to the mechanism and procedures for implementing this review. All communities in Fiji will be consulted fully in the review process. It will also involve the representatives of the people in Parliament and all the political parties.

As of December 1988 indigenous Fijians numbered about 345,000 out of a

(Mr. Rabuka, Fiji)

total population of 720,000. Fiji is their indigenous homeland. In fact, the Fijians, through their mataqalis - land-owning units - own 83 per cent of all the land in Fiji. We have a distinct culture and identity which we must, of necessity, foster and develop for the very survival of the Fijian race. My Government is committed to providing continuing special assistance to the indigenous Fijians until they achieve comparable economic status with the other communities in Fiji, in keeping with the indigenous policies and programmes in many of our member countries.

I should also like to express my Government's sincere and deep appreciation of the valuable efforts of the Working Group on Indigenous People in drafting the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. My Government, while reviewing our Constitution, is also committed to taking into account the meaning and obligations of this United Nations Declaration and all the recent developments in international and constitutional law on indigenous and tribal rights. My Government also supports the declaration of 1993 as the International Year for the World's Indigenous People.

And while we look forward to observing 1993 as the International Year for the World's Indigenous People, we are also coming to the close of a very important year, the International Year for Disabled Persons. The disabled are present in every class, in every race, in every culture and in every country. A feature the disabled share with indigenous groups is that, while they are present, they are often not heard. We commend the United Nations for its efforts all along, including this year, in bringing to the fore the concerns of the disabled.

My country remains committed to the work of the Special Committee on decolonization. The success that has been achieved so far should not lead us

(Mr. Rabuka, Fiji)

to forget what remains to be done. In the South Pacific region, we are encouraged by the measures being taken by the French Government under the Matignon Agreements to provide a framework for New Caledonia's evolution towards self-determination and independence. My Government welcomed the French Government's decision to allow a South Pacific ministerial mission to visit New Caledonia last year and to facilitate regular visits by United Nations missions in the future. We look forward to the mid-term review of the Matignon Agreements towards the end of the year. We consider this essential in ensuring that progress is maintained towards the decolonization of New Caledonia.

Fiji will continue to oppose nuclear testing and the dumping of nuclear and other toxic wastes in the South Pacific region. The cessation of these activities is vital for our very survival and the preservation of our fragile ecosystem. We in the South Pacific welcome the recent decision by France to suspend its nuclear testing in the region. We are greatly encouraged by France's accession to the nuclear non-proliferation Treaty, and we hope that France will also become a party to the Protocol of the South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone Treaty.

At the same time, my Government also welcomes the decision by the United States to cease the operation of its chemical-weapons incineration facility at Johnston Atoll.

We also applaud Japan's decision to cease large-scale drift-net fishing, often described as the "Wall of Death", in our South Pacific waters, and we in that region earnestly pray that other distant-water-fishing nations will soon make similar decisions.

(Mr. Rabuka, Fiji)

Secure and lasting peace in our world is what we must all aspire to. Disarmament and the elimination of weapons of mass destruction are essential requirements for peace. I believe that the Members of this Organization, all of us, should work together with total commitment to create and maintain secure and lasting peace on our planet, and simultaneously to increase and expand economic and social benefits to all the peoples of our world.

Finally, our world today is what we, its nations, make it. With a knowledge of yesterday, with our experiences of today, let us all, great and small, rich and poor, as Members of this international Organization, rededicate our energies and efforts and commit ourselves to building a better world for us and for those generations which come after us.

The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji for the statement he has just made.

Major-General Sitiveni L. Rabuka, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji, was escorted from the rostrum.

Mr. KAPUTIN (Papua New Guinea): On behalf of the Government and people of Papua New Guinea, I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. Your personal presence in this Hall, and your unanimous election to preside over our proceedings, are symbolic not only of the stirring changes which have been occurring in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, but of the manner in which they have been welcomed around the world. In offering you my delegation's greetings, cooperation and support, I should also like to pay tribute to the efficient manner in which your predecessor, Ambassador Samir Shihabi of Saudi Arabia, performed his duties.

Just as your election, Sir, is symbolic of wider changes in the world, so is the presence here for the first time of delegations from States which for a period were incorporated in the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. My delegation takes very great pleasure in welcoming the membership of, and participation in the United Nations by, the nine States which were once part of the Soviet Union and the three States which were once part of Yugoslavia whose representatives have just joined us. Their presence provides eloquent testimony to the power of ordinary people to resist - and eventually to overcome - both the ideology and the technology that are used in order to oppress them.

With the addition of San Marino, the goal of universal membership - and of global coverage - of the United Nations is now in sight.

Coming from a region where membership of the United Nations is less widespread than it is in other parts of the world, I pledge my Government's cooperation in the efforts to strengthen links between other South Pacific island States and the United Nations.

(Mr. Kaputin, Papua New Guinea)

Previous statements in this debate have made it quite clear that we have, in the words of the Secretary-General in "An Agenda for Peace",

"entered a time of global transition." (A/47/277, para. 11)

The Jakarta Message issued by the Tenth Summit Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, of which my Government has just become a full member, describes the present as "a time of profound change and rapid transition." But transition to what? And will the effects be the same around the globe?

Even as we welcome the end of the cold war, we would do well to bear in mind the observation made in "An Agenda for Peace", that

"the issues between States north and south grow more acute." (A/47/277, para. 8)

It is, again in the words of the Jakarta Message:

"a time of great promise as well as grave challenge, a time of opportunity amidst pervasive uncertainty."

It is no accident that the preamble to the Charter contains not only political, but economic and social objectives, or that the Charter provides for both a Security Council and an Economic and Social Council. Security has never been simply a military or a political question; it has always had economic and social aspects. For people in developing countries in particular the economic and social aspects of security are inseparable from - and often of great immediate importance than - the military and political aspects.

If the transition on which so many previous speakers believe we have embarked is to be towards global peace, then we need to pay greater attention to the economic and social issues which divide North and South. Thus my Government supports the proposal to convene, looks forward to taking part in,

(Mr. Kaputin, Papua New Guinea)

and hopes for a positive outcome from, the world summit for social development proposed to be held in 1995.

Disappointed though my Government is in the level of agreement reached at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in June this year, we shall continue to support the UNCED effort in particular and similar efforts by the United Nations generally. We have therefore offered to host a regional post-Rio seminar to follow up on UNCED in Port Moresby in November.

My Government welcomes the changes which have allowed people in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia to participate directly in national political and economic life again. We welcome them and their Governments to greater participation in international political and economic affairs, too.

We welcome no less the changes which have led to the replacement of dictatorships in Africa, Latin America and elsewhere. But in doing so I would not be honest unless I added that we are concerned about ensuring that the change is both comprehensive and enduring.

My Government is profoundly disturbed by the savage violence and terrible suffering being experienced by the victims of "ethnic cleansing" in the former Yugoslavia and of interracial, religious and ethnic conflicts there and elsewhere.

We sympathize with the concerns expressed by the members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and support the efforts being made by the United Nations and the European Economic Community to reduce these conflicts and to provide aid.

(Mr. Kaputin, Papua New Guinea)

But, as the Secretary-General has so pointedly reminded the world, there are terrible conflicts and suffering no less worthy of attention in other parts of the world, including Somalia.

It seems distressingly significant that even after the end of the cold war, and during the global transition which the Secretary-General has so eloquently analysed, part of the world where most humans live and where needs are greatest is still referred to - and treated - as a very poor third.

I ask you, Sir, to cast your mind back to the 1960s, when foreign domination came to an end in many parts of the world, a record number of new Members was admitted to the United Nations and the prospects for democracy and development seemed, by common consent, to be quite bright. Then think of the economic difficulties which often followed, and the dictatorships which all too frequently lasted until the present transition. And then ask why, whatever our hopes might be, we should expect that the future will be different.

(Mr. Kaputin,
Papua New Guinea)

The world has learned - or, at least, should have learned - from the past. But have we all drawn the right conclusions? And what have we done to act on even the most obvious of our conclusions?

It is one thing to welcome the holding of free elections. It is quite another to be certain either that they make a difference, or that they will continue to be held in an orderly, constitutional and fair way.

Politicians characteristically promise results. Their ability to be re-elected depends on results. So, too, does democracy itself. In other words, democracy, like security, is more than a matter of politics; it also has economic and social roots.

In developing countries - or, more precisely, countries where development is a far-distant aim rather than a near-reality - democracy depends not only on opportunities for political participation, but on opportunities for economic and social participation as well. As one who has played a modest part in constitution-making in Papua New Guinea, I am proud that the National Goals and Directive Principles contained in our national Constitution explicitly recognize that point.

I can recall a time, before Papua New Guinea became independent, when not only free elections but free markets were widely regarded as characteristic - or, at least, attainable - goals of many developing countries. I can also recall the pain and anger felt by ordinary village people when they discovered that free elections and free markets did not necessarily benefit them.

I am, in fact, spokesman for a movement which mobilized tens of thousands of people to ensure that political and economic development would serve their interests, and which paved the way to Papua New Guinea's independence. It is

(Mr. Kaputin,
Papua New Guinea)

precisely because of the lessons I learned from, and with, my people that I have chosen to make opportunity and participation the main theme of the policy I shall follow as my Government's Minister for Foreign Affairs. Those lessons are also among the reasons why my Government will be seeking support for an initiative designed to help identify, create, maintain, diversify and enlarge opportunities for economic participation, with particular reference to developing countries.

"An Agenda for Peace" is a most constructive contribution to thinking about conflict-avoidance, conflict-management and conflict-reduction after the end of the cold war. The initiative on self-determination being pursued by the Government of Liechtenstein should provide support for, and assist in, the development of ideas contained in the report. Ongoing discussions concerning options for reform of the United Nations, including the High-Level Working Group set up by the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as many statements made in the current debate, are clearly intended to contribute to the same end. It is surely among the most promising signs of the times that we can talk of a global agenda at all - and that the global agenda should be for peace.

The initiative which my Government proposes is intended to be, in effect, the economic counterpart to "An Agenda for Peace". Our aim is not to engage again in a general debate on development issues - although we have an obvious interest in continuing discussion of the nature, direction, pace and international environment for developmental change - but to stimulate the exchange of practical ideas and experiences relevant to enhancing and increasing opportunities for economic participation for the benefit of people in developing countries.

(Mr. Kaputin,
Papua New Guinea)

In short, the proposal is to seek support for the appointment of a panel of distinguished, expert and experienced persons to prepare a practical report based on experience in diverse countries and on a close, critical analysis of possible options for presentation to the United Nations.

My Government's plan is to seek the support of fellow members of the South Pacific Forum and other regional groups to which we belong or with which, like the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), we have close and cordial relations, to raise the proposal for consideration by members of the Group of 77 and the Non-Aligned Movement, and to discuss it on a bilateral basis as widely as we can with a view to submitting a resolution to the Assembly at its forty-eighth session. We would hope to see a panel appointed in time to present a report during the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly, and to have it debated in 1995.

Like many other countries represented in this Assembly, Papua New Guinea inherited many of its economic, legal and other arrangements from abroad. Many of the practices, policies and laws followed in the monetary sector of our national economy were originally devised in different conditions, by different people and to serve different objectives.

We believe that we have not exhausted - or even considered - all practical policy or legal options for facilitating economic participation by our citizens in either national or international affairs. We have not had ready and systematic access to experiences elsewhere.

We do not believe that market forces on their own will necessarily allow our people adequate opportunities to participate in and benefit from economic development without further change.

(Mr. Kaputin,
Papua New Guinea)

Further options need to be identified and further changes will have to be made if people seeking to participate in economic development from the baseline at which most people in developing countries start are to be able to identify, utilize and benefit from the opportunities which are - more often in theory than in practice - available to them. We want to learn what the options are.

My Government will, therefore, be looking to other Members of the United Nations for support and ideas to advance our proposal. The result will, we hope, be an important, practical guide to options for creating, maintaining, diversifying and/or enlarging opportunities for economic participation, with particular reference to developing countries.

My Government has recently found itself being criticized, for the first time, before the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva and the Joint Assembly of the African, Caribbean and Pacific signatories of the Lomé Convention and the European Economic Community over human rights abuses in the North Solomons Province of Papua New Guinea.

It gives me no pleasure to say, even though it is true, that most of the abuses, for which parties on all sides of the conflict must accept some responsibility, occurred while a previous Government was in office, and that my colleagues and I opposed them at the time. As members of the present Government, we are now responsible for resolving the situation, whatever its causes. We must accept responsibility for what we decide or condone from now on. But the situation which gave rise to the criticism to which I have

(Mr. Kaputin,
Papua New Guinea)

referred owes much to economic practices, policies and laws which were devised with little or no regard for popular participation, and with even less regard for the particular characteristics of the societies in which most of the people in the area continue to live.

(Mr. Kaputin, Papua New Guinea)

It also highlights the need to recognize that processes which might help alleviate tensions and reduce conflicts in some parts of the world might not have the same effects in others. They might, in fact, only make matters worse.

For Papua New Guinea, as for many other developing countries which have become independent since the Second World War, nation-building remains a difficult problem and a pressing concern. The issue for us is not, as it is elsewhere, to find ways of managing ethnic and other tensions now that the ideological and technological weight of the cold war has been lifted from previously subject peoples, but rather to reconcile differences within and harness them to a common, national cause.

Furthermore, my Government has taken the view that dealing with human rights on their own is often not to the point. It can, in fact, be irrelevant and can even actively contribute to further suffering.

My Government has, therefore, admitted that wrongs have been committed by participants on all sides of the conflict in Papua New Guinea's North Solomons Province. It has taken steps to ensure that they cease and are not repeated and has invited other Governments and international organizations to help redress them by contributing, for example, to the costs of assessing needs, planning rehabilitation and restoring services to people who have suffered without them.

My Government believes that Papua New Guineans are best placed to resolve the conflict; but we look to others for help in rehabilitating people, repairing damage and restoring services.

My Government intends to be among the concerned participants in the second world conference on human rights, scheduled for June 1993. As was done at the tenth Summit Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement, we reaffirm the universality of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms, which are

(Mr. Kaputin, Papua New Guinea)

embodied in the Papua New Guinea Constitution. But, like other members of the Non-Aligned Movement, we believe that economic and social progress facilitates the achievement of such rights and freedoms, which is why I have emphasized economic opportunity and participation. For similar reasons we welcome the broad scope proposed for the world conference on women in 1995, which focuses on action in the context of equality, development and peace.

As an active participant in the work of the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly and the Committee of 24, my Government is a strong supporter of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (1990-2000). We therefore look forward to hosting a Pacific regional seminar on decolonization in Port Moresby in 1993 in order to help further the plan of action for the Decade.

In our immediate region, we continue to support United Nations involvement in the decolonization of New Caledonia and trust that the outcome of the forthcoming mid-term review of the implementation of the Matignon Accords will lead to further progress towards safeguarding the legitimate rights of the Kanaks.

As far as other developments in the South Pacific are concerned, we welcome the French Government's decision to suspend its nuclear-weapon-testing programme in French Polynesia. We urge that it be ended for good.

We look to the Government of the United States of America to honour President Bush's promise to limit the use of Johnston Atoll for disposing of weapons which were never directed at us while they were active but which now threaten our safety, health and economic welfare.

We seek assurances that the Pacific Ocean will not be used to transport plutonium or other hazardous nuclear, chemical or biological materials which

(Mr. Kaputin, Papua New Guinea)

might pollute the seas on which we rely. Promises that every precaution will be taken are simply not enough.

Like the Governments of other South Pacific island countries, we are sympathetic to the aspirations of those who favour increased regional economic cooperation in Europe and North America. We support efforts to assist former communist States in the immense task of economic and social reconstruction which lies ahead. But, like the Governments of other developing countries, we in the South Pacific are concerned that regional integration and efforts to meet needs in other parts of the world should not proceed at the expense of the needs of our people.

We are also concerned that the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) be brought to an early conclusion, with due regard for the need to secure and expand opportunities for the economic participation of developing countries in the international economy. It is, in fact, precisely because we believe that opportunities for economic participation should be greater and more equitably distributed than they have been that my Government has proposed the initiative I have previously outlined.

My Government supports the active role being taken by the United Nations, in difficult circumstances, to ensure peace and to bring about a return to normalcy in Cambodia. We also support efforts to secure peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to facilitate relief efforts in Somalia. We are heartened by what we have heard from the Governments of Israel and neighbouring States concerning the prospects for a negotiated settlement of outstanding sources of conflict in the Middle East.

We are cautiously hopeful about the prospects for a democratic, non-racial South Africa. But, as the situation now stands, my Government

(Mr. Kaputin, Papua New Guinea)

believes that it should maintain existing bans on all dealings with South Africa, continue to monitor developments there closely and consider relaxing those bans only as further progress occurs in the desired direction and in close consultation with African States.

Like our predecessors, my Government supports efforts to limit the production and sale of arms. We believe that unwanted foreign military forces should be removed from countries which do not pose a threat to their neighbours or to international law.

However, coming as I do from a developing country, I feel it important to repeat that we need to acknowledge the reality, recognized also in the report "An Agenda for Peace", that there are non-military threats to peace which are perhaps becoming more obvious than ever before. My Government agrees with the observation made in the report that there is a need to strengthen arrangements to identify, monitor, synthesize information about and act collectively to avert, reduce and limit such threats, with sensitivity to local circumstances, including the interests of well-intentioned States, and with full regard for international law.

I cannot help noticing not only how the membership and the agenda of the General Assembly have changed in recent years but also how the content, tone and frankness with regard to domestic difficulties, and even the length of contributions to the general debate, have changed, and generally for the better.

(Mr. Kaputin, Papua New Guinea)

As head of my country's delegation, I have had the privilege of listening to delegations from newly admitted Member States make use of the opportunity to participate in the General Assembly on their own account for the first time. I trust that other Governments will see fit to support my proposal for a United Nations-sponsored initiative to prepare and discuss a detailed report on how best to go about the task - complementary to securing increased opportunities for political participation - of securing increased opportunities for economic participation, with particular reference to needs in and of developing countries. Opportunity and participation are the keys to political development, security and peace. They are also the keys to economic development and justice, including equity between, and within, the northern and southern parts of the globe.

ADDRESS BY MR. MAXIME CARLOT KORMAN, PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF VANUATU

The PRESIDENT: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu.

Mr. Maxime Carlot Korman, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, was escorted to the rostrum.

The PRESIDENT: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, His Excellency the Honourable Maxime Carlot Korman, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. CARLOT KORMAN (Vanuatu) (interpretation from French): I join in the congratulations extended to you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. Your election symbolizes the great changes taking place throughout the world, and is a tribute to your country and to your people, as well as to you yourself.

(Mr. Carlot Korman, Vanuatu)

I should also like to pay a special tribute to you your predecessor, Mr. Samir Shihabi, the former Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia, for the manner in which he presided over the affairs of the General Assembly during its forty-sixth session.

There can be no doubt that there has been no period in our lifetime when the world has enjoyed greater hope for a lasting international peace than it does now. The gradual reduction of tension and the eventual elimination of antagonisms between the world's two foremost military Powers have had dramatic results in nuclear disarmament, and ultimately contributed to the end of the cold war. Today, the widening circle of democracy holds out the promise of an international environment that could become even more conducive to the attainment of international peace and security.

None the less, many problems persist and plague the Earth, threatening our never-ending search for justice, equality and peace. Democracy, so cherished and championed, within certain national borders, is often less cherished, if not disregarded, when it comes to the interests of the large and powerful countries, on the one hand, and those of the smaller and economically weaker States, on the other.

Moreover, nationalism, which could, and should, be a progressive vehicle for unifying peoples, rather than dividing them, has on occasion been encouraged to manifest its narrowest and most intolerant forms. In too many parts of the world, old ethnic antagonisms have been reawakened and are being exploited by demagogues who are very adept at using these antagonisms to serve their selfish and short-sighted ambitions. Unfortunately, far too often the victims of this demagoguery have no recourse to any legal mechanism that might spare their lives and end their suffering.

(Mr. Carlot Korman, Vanuatu)

Tragically, we have seen certain scenarios played out far too often. At first, the world sits idly by and barely notices the insulting words and the offensive speeches that are made. Then, even more inflammatory rhetoric is spouted, and eventually stones are hurled. Next, individuals are assaulted in the streets and their homes are invaded and vandalized. Before too long, conditions deteriorate irreparably.

For some, that constitutes a point of no return. Ignorance, which breeds hatred, accelerates and races forward unchecked, building its own momentum with ever-increasing destructive force. Entire neighbourhoods or villages are placed under siege. The demagogues, by now totally intoxicated by the false power of the forces they have unleashed, will always try to claim to be defending the loftiest ideals. In fact, they are simply following their basest instincts.

Vanuatu has long been disturbed by the hesitancy and reluctance of some members of the international community to address this very troublesome issue. In the past we have warned that failure to examine the causes of ethnic antagonisms or intercommunal conflicts, failure to devise peaceful ways to resolve them, could only lead to a situation in which, one day, international peace and security would be quite seriously threatened by such developments. Regrettably, that day has now arrived. Thus, while some of us have never had more reason to rejoice and others have never had more reason to mourn, still others have never faced a less certain future.

What possible joy can a mother in the Balkans feel when she buries her young son whose life was ended by an unknown sniper's bullet? What possible

(Mr. Carlot Korman, Vanuatu)

joy can a father in Somalia feel when he watches his daughter die a slow and painful death from starvation? What can possibly ease the terror that fills the hearts of defenceless and innocent refugees who find themselves caught in the vice of political and social indifference or who behold the chaos in native lands they had always considered havens of justice and equality.

While some rightly rejoice over the end of the cold war and the spread of democracy, others are homeless and continue to suffer the pangs of hunger - often the result of economic deprivation. Still others mourn the sudden and violent end of the lives of their loved ones and wonder anxiously whether they themselves will survive to see the next sunrise. While some are able to applaud what has been achieved, others can only contemplate the long road still to be travelled.

(Mr. Carlot Korman, Vanuatu)

From South Africa to Afghanistan, from Cambodia to Haiti, from Bosnia and Herzegovina to East Timor, from the heart of Europe all the way to the sunny South Pacific, people are suffering - some for a long time now - because of the difficulties of all kinds that they face, and the international community must still shoulder the major responsibility.

All these ideas are emphasized in the Secretary-General's remarkable report entitled "An Agenda for Peace". He has made a thought-provoking analysis, and we find this document to be a very good starting-point for much-needed discussions as we approach the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and as mankind prepares to enter the twenty-first century.

The international political environment is not the only environment that concerns us. Much has been written and much has been said about the Earth Summit held this past June in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It remains to be seen what will be done as a follow-up to that very important meeting.

We are pleased to note that some very positive measures have already been taken. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is to be commended for having made a significant financial contribution to Capacity 21. Canada has indicated that it will follow suit. We trust that others also will do so very soon. This important initiative will help the developing countries formulate national policies and legislation in support of the environment and sustainable development. It will focus on the technical training of human resources and the strengthening of regional and national institutions. More importantly, it will show how serious the developed countries of the North are about the extensive multilateral commitments necessary to breathe life into our post-Rio journey.

(Mr. Carlot Korman, Vanuatu)

At this session of the General Assembly a number of important measures should be taken as follow-ups to the Earth Summit. Among these, of course, is the establishment of a high-level commission on sustainable development. It is our hope that the commission's secretariat will be situated at United Nations Headquarters here in New York and that the commission will meet in New York so that all countries will have an opportunity to participate in, and contribute to, the commission's important work. Situating the commission's secretariat elsewhere and holding its meetings outside New York would without any doubt result in sharply reduced participation by a large number of developing countries and would limit the commission's effectiveness. Furthermore, we feel that situating the commission in New York would be most cost-effective for the United Nations and would stimulate the very necessary interaction between the commission, UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Bank and the other multilateral agencies that are so essential to making the follow-up to Rio meaningful and effective.

We strongly believe, as do our colleagues in the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), that the decisions made with respect to the site of the commission's secretariat, the venue of its meetings, its size and its composition will be critical in determining whether there will be universal participation and transparency in the work of the commission. Our major concern is that this matter not be decided on any ground except what is likely to lead to the most effective functioning of the commission and its productive interaction with other agencies.

(Mr. Carlot Korman, Vanuatu)

During the current session of the General Assembly, an intergovernmental committee to negotiate a convention on drought and desertification will also be established. Vanuatu intends to participate actively in that committee's work and to lend its support to those countries most immediately threatened by drought and desertification. We feel that addressing this problem is one of the greatest challenges facing the international community.

Another of the very important measures the General Assembly will consider as a follow-up to the Earth Summit is the proposal to hold a world conference on the sustainable development of the small island States. Such a meeting is long overdue. We hope a resolution on convening the conference will be adopted by consensus and that the essential objective of the conference, which AOSIS is proposing be held in Barbados, will be to ensure concrete and meaningful action by the international community to assist the world's most vulnerable, yet very frequently overlooked, countries. We appeal to all countries to lend their support to this conference and to join us in the warm and friendly atmosphere of Barbados next June in order to continue our journey together on the road charted by the Rio Conference.

Vanuatu is not only a small island State but also a least developed country. We therefore have a real concern for our economy as well as for political democracy. Thus, we aspire also to economic development. Therefore, we join in the appeals for measures to correct the trade imbalances, to reduce the debt burden, and to establish fair prices for our commodities. We believe that measures must be taken to overcome these scourges of underdevelopment.

(Mr. Carlot Korman, Vanuatu)

This subject is of such great importance that we approach the question of the reform and restructuring of the United Nations development system with a great deal of hope that creative approaches will be devised and effectively utilized in the post-cold-war period.

We are pleased and proud to report that next month our Parliament in Vanuatu will act on legislation required for the ratification of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Convention on Biological Diversity. We strongly feel it is essential that these conventions be ratified, enter into force and be strictly adhered to at the earliest possible moment.

We are also pleased that there is finally a convention banning chemical weapons. We pray that those who possess such weapons - and those who would possess them - will see the wisdom of becoming parties to that legal instrument and forever banning those horrible tools of death.

(Mr. Carlot Korman, Vanuatu)

Environmental disasters that have recently struck countries as diverse and geographically distant from each other as the Bahamas, France, Nicaragua, Pakistan and the United States suggest that the world has not a moment to spare if we are to avoid the potential global calamity that could result from mankind's long-term abuse of the environment. Precautionary, preventive measures should be taken now; otherwise it will most assuredly be too late.

For decades, the peoples of the South Pacific have seen their region utilized for the testing of nuclear weapons, for the dumping of radioactive wastes and, most recently, for the destruction of chemical weapons. Our region paid high and unwanted costs for technologies from which we received comparatively little benefit. Today, we South Pacific leaders are very concerned about plans to ship plutonium through our waters. We trust that those who are involved in these plans will heed our voices while we still have voices to be heard.

I conclude by joining in the welcome that has been expressed to all of our new Members. Theirs has not been an easy path to statehood, international recognition and membership of the United Nations. We salute their perseverance and their vision of their own futures. We stand ready to join hands with them in forging a more effective, more representative and more responsive United Nations. In that way we shall help to create a more democratic international order - a world order that is democratic in fact as well as in word; a world order that respects all countries, whether large and powerful or small and vulnerable.

The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Maxime Carlot Korman, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, was escorted from the rostrum.

The PRESIDENT: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate.

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

The PRESIDENT: It was my sincere intention to listen to every one of the 167 speeches made during the general debate, but at times my duties as President of the General Assembly engaged me elsewhere. None the less, we have all been privileged to listen to 24 Heads of State, one Vice-President, 13 Prime Ministers, 10 deputy Prime Ministers, 103 Foreign Ministers and 16 Chairmen of Delegation.

The current session of the General Assembly is taking place at a crucial moment in the history of the United Nations. It is a time of unprecedented opportunities, following the end of the cold war. But it is also a period of sober assessment as we consider the new and complex problems facing the Organization and the world.

After three weeks of general debate in the Assembly, I take great pleasure in noting that one of the most significant features evidenced in the statements is the need to make the United Nations truly effective and swiftly responsive in meeting the challenges of a rapidly changing world. The statements made in the general debate provided evidence of this changing world as they set forth a multidimensional view of virtually every major international problem. Moreover, these statements reflected a cohesion of

(The President)

ideas regarding the critical need for reform in the United Nations, including the General Assembly. A strong impetus for future reform is to be found in the commendable report "An Agenda for Peace" of the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

It is not incidental that, following the general debate, the first item we shall take up - and we shall do so on Friday - is, in part, the "Agenda for Peace", and we shall then address the significant issues raised throughout the general debate about the future of this forum and its enhanced effectiveness.

The general debate has again demonstrated the unique role the General Assembly plays, and has proved how important it is that we should realize its full potential as an unprecedented world parliament. One of the most important tasks of this forum is to ensure preventive diplomacy and peacemaking activities, thus safeguarding social and economic conditions for all in this changed world.

It is my sincere hope that the resolutions to be adopted in the months ahead will not only result in concrete action but also comprise appropriate mechanisms for supervision of their implementation.

In conclusion, I should like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to all those representatives who, in addressing the Assembly, made generous references to my country and to me personally.

May I take it now that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 9?

It was so decided.

PROGRAMME OF WORK

The PRESIDENT: May I remind representatives that tomorrow we shall begin discussion of agenda item 10, entitled "Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization", which includes the Secretary-General's report "An Agenda for Peace".

I should also like to remind members that we shall begin the meeting punctually at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.